

Climate

Climate crisis

Experts try to cut carbon footprints

By Seth Borenstein

For years, Kim Cobb was the Indiana Jones of climate science. The Georgia Tech professor flew to the caves of Borneo to study ancient and current climate conditions. She jetted to a remote South Pacific island to see the effects of warming on coral.

Add to that flights to Paris, Rome, Vancouver and elsewhere. All told, in the last three years, she's flown 29 times to study, meet or talk about global warming.

Then Cobb thought about how much her personal actions were contributing to the climate crisis, so she created a spreadsheet. She found that those flights added more than 73,000 pounds of heat-trapping carbon to the air.

Now she is about to ground herself, and she is not alone. Some climate scientists and activists are limiting their flying, their consumption of meat and their overall carbon footprints to avoid adding to the global warming they study. Cobb will fly just once next year, to attend a massive international science meeting in Chile.

"People want to be part of the solution," she said. "Especially when they spent their whole lives with their noses stuck up against" data showing the problem.

The issue divides climate scientists and activists and plays out on social media. Texas Tech's Katharine Hayhoe, an atmospheric scientist who flies once a month, often to talk to climate doubters in the movement, was blasted on Twitter because she keeps flying.

Hayhoe and other still-flying scientists note that aviation is only 3% of global carbon emissions.

Solutions

Jonathan Foley, executive director of the climate solutions think-tank Project Drawdown, limits his airline trips but will not stop flying because, he says, he must meet with donors to keep his organization alive. He calls flight shaming "the climate movement eating its own."

Over the next couple of weeks, climate scientists and environmental advocates will fly across the globe. Some will be jetting to Madrid for United Nations climate negotiations. Others, including Cobb, will fly to San Francisco for a major earth sciences conference, her last for a while.

"I feel real torn about that," said Indiana University's Shahzeen Attari, who studies human behavior and climate change. She calls Cobb an important climate communicator. "I don't want to clip her wings."

But Cobb and Hayhoe are judged by their audiences on how much energy they use themselves, Attari said. Attari's research shows that audiences are turned off by scientists who use lots of energy at home. Listeners are more likely to respond to experts who use less electricity.

"It's like having an overweight doctor giving you dieting advice," Attari said. She found that scientists who fly to give talks bother people less.

In science, flying is "deeply embedded in how we do academic work," said Steven Allen, a management researcher at the University of Sheffield, who recently organized a symposium aimed at reducing flying in academia. He said the conference went well, with 60 people participating remotely from 12 countries.

Pennsylvania State University's Michael Mann, who flies but less than he used to, said moderation is key.

"I don't tell people they need to become childless, off-the-grid hermits. And I'm not one myself," Mann said in an email. "I do tell people that individual action is PART of the solution, and that there are many things we can do in our everyday lives that save us money, make us healthier, make us feel better about ourselves AND decrease our environmental footprint. Why wouldn't we do those things?"

Mann said he gets his electricity from renewables, drives a hybrid vehicle, doesn't eat meat and has one child.

When Hayhoe flies, she makes sure to bundle in several lectures and visits into one flight, including 30 talks in Alaska in one five-day trip. She said more people come out to see a lecture than if it were given remotely, and she also learns from talking to the people at lectures.

"They need a catalyst to get to the next step and me coming could be that catalyst," Hayhoe said. (AP)



Cobb



A Uniper coal-fired power plant and a BP oil refinery and chemical plant are at work in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. The UN Climate Change Conference COP25 takes place in Madrid until Dec 13 under the presidency of the government of Chile with logistical support from the government of Spain. (AP)

Climate

Investors up call for govts to take action

'Tech, warming creating inequalities'

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 9, (RTRS): A new generation of global inequalities fueled by climate change and technology could trigger violence and political instability if left unchecked, the United Nations warned on Monday.

Climate change and technology rather than wealth and income are the modern-day wedges that are increasingly dividing the haves from the have-nots, said the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 2019 Human Development Report.

These forms of inequality are rising as progress has been made in more traditional measures of inequality such as extreme poverty and disease, it said.

"Under the shadow of the climate crisis and sweeping technological change, inequalities in human development are taking new forms," the report said.

"The climate crisis is already hitting the poorest hardest, while technological advances such as machine learning and artificial intelligence can leave behind entire groups of people, even countries."

Allowing these new inequalities to grow could be "extremely dangerous and highly volatile," said UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner.

"Across the rich and emerging countries and also developing countries where a middle class has emerged, their reactions are increasingly violent," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation

ahead of the report's release.

"If not managed well and practically, it will essentially manifest itself in what we see on the evening news — burning cars, burning buildings, burning infrastructure, millions of people in the streets protesting and overthrowing governments."

Rising

Street protests have filled the news of late, in Hong Kong, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela and elsewhere over an array of issues including rising prices, government policies, corruption and pro-democracy movements.

The UNDP report said climate change will fuel inequality as it hits developing countries, many with limited capacity to resist threats from malnutrition, disease and heat stress.

"So the effects of climate change deepen existing social and economic fault lines," it said.

As to technology's effect on inequality, the report said the proportion of adults with university-level education was growing more than six times faster in highly developed countries than in lower developed countries.

It also said fixed broadband subscriptions were growing 15 times faster in developed countries.

"These are the inequalities that will likely determine people's ability to ...

function in a knowledge economy," it said.

The changes come as many more people today no longer live in extreme poverty, Steiner said.

"Our aspirations have changed," he said. "People are not just looking at the dollars in their account. They are looking at opportunities, at social mobility and at freedom of choice."

Meanwhile, more than 600 institutional investors managing a whopping \$37 trillion in client assets called Monday for governments to step up their efforts against climate change.

The investors, including banks, pension funds and insurance companies, directed their message to countries participating in a two-week UN climate conference in Madrid.

Firms such as Britain's Aviva, the California Public Employees' Retirement System and Zurich Insurance Group demanded an end to thermal coal power plants worldwide, the introduction of a "meaningful" price on carbon, an end to fossil fuel subsidies and for governments to increase planned emissions cuts beyond what has already been pledged.

Similar appeals have been issued by investment companies before, but Monday's is the biggest so far. The 631 companies involved held assets worth more than the GDP of the United States and China together last year.



Physics Laureate Didier Queloz, from Switzerland, delivers his Nobel Lecture at Stockholm University in Stockholm, Sweden on Dec 8. (AP)

Discovery

**Ship docks with ISS:** An unmanned Russian ship carrying tons of supplies successfully docked Monday with the International Space Station.

The Progress MS-13 cargo ship had lifted off on Friday atop a Soyuz rocket from the Russian space complex in Baikunur, Kazakhstan.

It successfully docked with the space outpost on Monday at 1035 GMT.

The Progress brought about 3 tons (2.7 metric tons) of food, fuel and supplies to the space station, which currently has six astronauts aboard — NASA astronauts Andrew Morgan, Jessica Meir and Christina Koch; Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano of the European Space Agency; and Russia's Alexander Skvortsov and Oleg Skripochka.

It is the second supply spacecraft to arrive at the space station in the past two days. On Sunday morning, SpaceX's Dragon cargo ship brought research materials, crew supplies and hardware to the space station. (AP)

**Groups purchase land:** Conservation groups have purchased a swath of land in Georgia that they describe as one of the largest unprotected open space parcels along the southeast Atlantic coast.

The Conservation Fund and Open Space Institute announced Friday that they had bought the 16,000-acre (65-square-kilometer) site along the Satilla River east of Woodbine. They declined to say how much

they paid for it.

The groups plan to sell it within the next few years to the state of Georgia for use as a wildlife management area where people can hunt, fish and hike.

"It's providing a tremendous opportunity for the people of Georgia to enjoy our great outdoors," said Andrew Schock, Georgia state director at The Conservation Fund.

The land near Cumberland Island — dubbed the "Ceylon property" — has several types of habitat, including salt marsh and long-leaf pine forest.



Morgan



Meir

Long-leaf pine used to cover tens of millions of acres in the southeast US, but now only a few million acres remain and most of that is fragmented and in poor condition, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

The new property is also home to an estimated 2,000 gopher tortoises, whose burrows provide shelter for many other species.

Conservation groups and Georgia officials are aiming to protect 65 of the roughly 122 viable gopher tortoise populations in the state to try to prevent the turtle from a listing under the Endangered Species Act. (AP)

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